

Hackney Union News

Produced by Hackney
Trade
Union Support Unit.

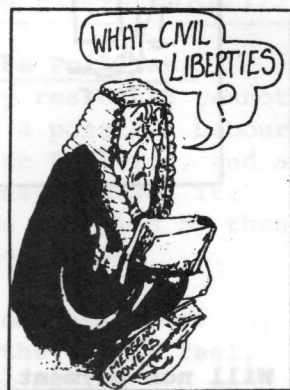
May/June 1990.

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Hackney Union News is produced in English & Turkish by workers at Hackney Trade Union Support Unit. The articles do not necessarily correspond to the views of the workers or the management committee and are written to produce debate within the Trade Union movement.

Articles, letters, comments & suggestions to:- HUN, 489 Kingsland Road E8.
Tel: 249-6930 or 249-8086. If you would like a regular copy let us know. -

PAY NO POLL TAX

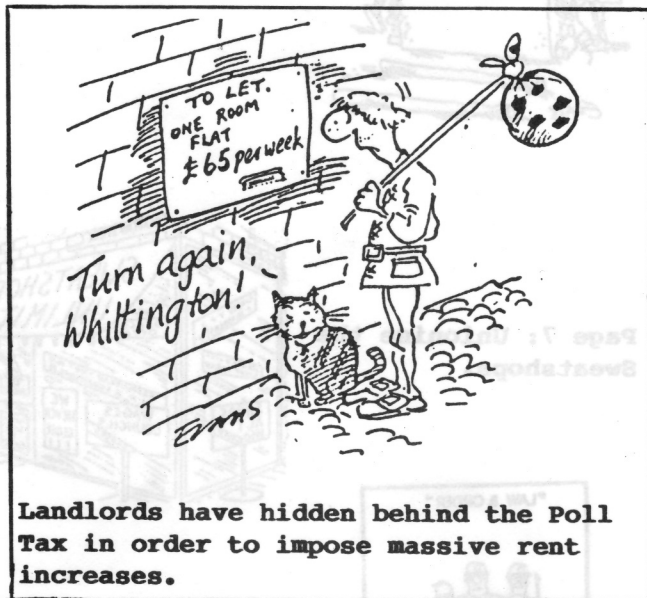
By Liz Short.

The Poll Tax is now upon us, but as the council has so far managed to issue only a trickle of bills, most people have yet to receive their demand for £499. Those expecting a rebate may well get a shock of a full bill, for the rebate work in the housing benefit office is way behind.

Late with the bills, late with the rebates, Hackney's difficulties in recruiting 'recovery' staff will mean even more delay in dealing with non-payers. Hackney Against the Poll tax Federation (HAPT) is organising a mass campaign of non-payment in the borough and believes that the chaos in the council gives us a flying start.

Why non-payment?

Most people in Hackney will simply not be able to afford a Poll tax bill of £499 each, on top of increases in other bill and steep rent rises.



Our non-payment campaign aims to protect people who cannot pay. HAPT is a federation of Anti-Poll Tax Unions which have been set up round the borough, to provide a network of local support for people who cannot or will not pay their Poll Tax. Regular meetings give advice & mutual support.

HAPT is calling on the council not to prosecute non-payers, but should they so finally abandon any shred of principle as to send in the bailiffs against the people who voted them into office, HAPT is pledged to organise defence groups to prevent the bailiffs assessing & selling hard earned goods.

The government and the media have given wide publicity to the range of measures that can be used against non-payers. HAPT aims to counter their claims with accurate information and estimates of their chances of success in getting the money out of people who simply haven't got it. Did you know for instance, that the bailiffs have no right of entry to your home? They can only come in, in the first instance, if you let them in.



Will non-payment destroy council services?

Many people considering non-payment are genuinely worried that their action may lead to a collapse of essential services. But the Poll Tax itself is the biggest threat to them.

Three quarters of the cost of local services will still be covered by government grants and the distribution of the new business rates. The Poll Tax will only contribute a quarter of the funds to pay for our services. Cutbacks in government grants and their allowances for only 4% inflation, instead of the real 8.1% and rising, will have a more drastic effect than even the most successful non-payment campaign.

PAY NO POLL TAX (2)

Already this year, the council has made 10 million pounds worth of cuts to get the Poll Tax down from £584 to £499. Cuts which mean old people's homes will be sold off and nursery fees will go up! Inevitably job losses will result.



"IF I'M GOING TO BE POLL TAXED,
I MIGHT AS WELL DRESS LIKE IT."

Join HAPTF and fight the Poll Tax.

We believe that Hackney residents cannot wait for two years for a possible Labour government to repeal the Poll Tax, and a further couple while they replace it. Family finances will be crippled by then and services will be destroyed.

We have very few ways of making our rulers take notice of the way we feel, but refusing to put our hands into our pockets to pay an unjust tax is one of them.

Mass non-payment will force the government to repeal the tax, or will force them to call a general election. We need to act together to support each other & stop people feeling isolated & worried at home with bills they can't pay.

Contact HAPTF for details of your local Anti-Poll Tax Union, or help to set one up in your area or your workplace. Write to David Webb, Secretary, HAPTF, c/o The Fire Station, 61 Leswin Road, N16. Or leave a message on our answerphone:- 0426-911161. And remember....**PAY NO POLL TAX!**

'POLITICAL VICTIMISATION'

By Neill Roberts, NALGO Publicity Officer.

The suspension by Hackney Council of NALGO member, Andy Murphy, on April 5th was lifted on April 30th. The suspension was for allegedly 'bringing the Council into disrepute.' This was a case of political victimisation worthy of subscribers to the Economic League blacklisting agency.

Despite the decision this is not the end of the matter as the Council, in lifting the suspension, has made it clear that investigations are still continuing.

Meanwhile NALGO has agreed that Andy should not make any statements on behalf of his political organisation, Class War, or speak about his case to the press.

Andy's 'crime' was to act in his own time as a spokesperson for Class War. His statements didn't mention Hackney Council or his employment, & were to do with the police attack on the Anti-Poll Tax demo on March 31st in Trafalgar Square.



After 'law & order' supporters, including the Militant members who had organised the demo, had blamed the violence on anarchists, including Class War, & other 'extremists', Andy began to receive interview requests.

Many of these press & TV requests were relayed to him at work by Hackney Council's Press Office. Andy took advice from his Personnel Department on how to deal with this situation, & was told that it was OK to talk to the media, as long as it was in his own time.

On April 3rd a Tory MP invited Thatcher to agree at Prime Minister's Question Time that Hackney Council should not be employing someone with Andy's views.

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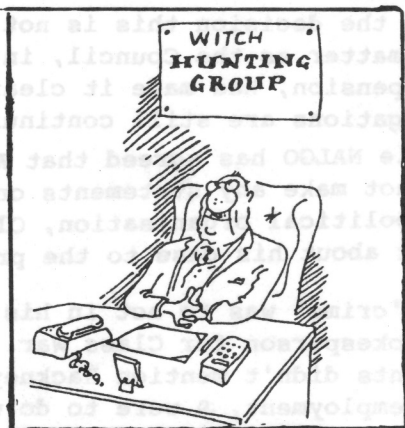
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On the same day the Council also issued a press statement that they would be taking action. Andy Murphy was thus suspended on April 5th.

The suspension was authorised by the Assistant Director of Finance, who 'justified' it as necessary whilst an investigation was held into **allegations of 'potential gross misconduct'**- bringing the Council into disrepute under its 'Code Of Official Conduct.'

The 'investigation' was only started on Friday April 20th. In a gruelling 9 hour session NALGO stewards pointed out that Andy's statements had nothing to do with his work & were made in his own time. However the council refused to budge.



That this is a case of political victimisation there is no doubt. The suspension decision must have been taken by the Council leadership. NALGO has reason to believe that it was the result of an order from the top of the Labour Party. It seems that the witch hunt against socialists in the Labour Party is now extended to include workers of Labour-controlled authorities.

Andy's workmates in Housing Benefits walked out for half a day on Friday April 6th in protest at his suspension, but a number of factors, including Easter, delayed a response from the NALGO branch until a meeting on Thursday April 19th.

This rejected an immediate walkout as impractical, & opted to build for an escalating programme of strike action should disciplinary proceedings be started against Andy.

However with the council appearing unwilling to move it was agreed at the follow-up meeting to take strike action on Wednesday May 2nd. This forced the council into informal negotiations & the lifting of Andy Murphy's suspension. However, as earlier stated, this case is far from over.

BIRMINGHAM 6

By Val Veness.

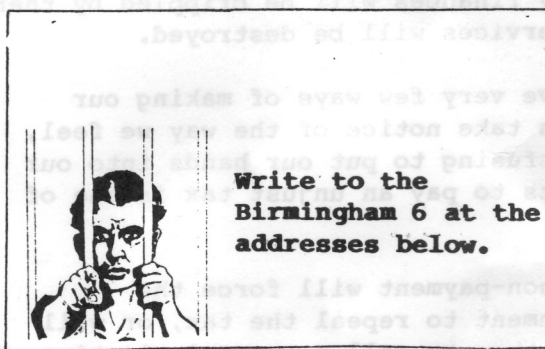
The campaign to clear the 6 Birmingham workers, framed in 1974 for the pub bombings, has recently gained a lot of publicity after the TV programme and the updated publication of Chris Mullins excellent book 'Error of Judgement.'

Their case has now been taken up by the TUC General Council; who have agreed to write to individual trades unions. In addition many union conferences have resolutions tabled on the issue; NUPE for example has 6 from different branches.

It is important that Trade unionists put pressure on their regional & national organisations to publicise these various decisions & that real support is given to the campaign to free them.

The six are now 'Category B' prisoners; a strange decision if the authorities thought they were really dealing with IRA bombers! It now means that we can maintain better contact with them.

Having visited them on many occasions I can vouch that their morale is amazingly high & that they are keen to hear from trade unionists, though as they are still restricted as to how many letters they can send out then the correspondence tends to be 'one-way.' However, if branches & individuals could send letters then this does more for morale than could possibly be explained here.



The 'six' are in 2 separate prisons:- Paddy Hill, Richard McIlkenny and Billy Power are in HM Prison Gartree, Leicester Rd, Market Harborough, Leics LE1 7RP.

Hugh Callaghan, Gerry Hunter and John Walker are in HM Prison Long Lartin, South Littleton, Evesham, Worcs WR11 5TZ.

Drop them a line & let them know that Hackney Trade Unionists are with them in their fight for justice.

'CRIMINALISING PROTEST'

Hackney Community Defence Association (HCDA) has written a report on the 'Poll Tax riot' outside the Town Hall on March 8th. It is available at a cost of £2.50 + postage.

Criminalising protest.

In the aftermath of the countrywide anti-Poll Tax demonstrations it has become clear that the government, police, court and media are conspiring to criminalise public protest.



5,000 people attended the **anti-Poll Tax demo on March 8th**. The Council denied them access to the boarded up Town Hall, & hired a private security firm to patrol the building. Over 300 police confronted protestors who were determined to voice their opposition to the hated tax.

Hackney's opposition to the Poll Tax was lost in the media reports into the rioting & looting which followed the largest local demo in the country.

57 people were arrested on the night; many have been charged with minor public order offences, some unable to avoid police baton charges, were randomly arrested, & others are being fitted up for serious criminal offences.

Just as the mineworkers, printworkers and seafarers stood by their members arrested on picket lines; it is now time for the people of Hackney, the community groups & Trade Unions, to support those arrested on the Hackney anti-Poll Tax demo.

HCDA is working with the Hackney Poll Tax defendants. We are looking for witnesses & would appeal for people to contact us. A bust fund has been set up to pay fines & donations are needed.

For further details contact HCDA, Family Centre, 50 Rectory Road, London N16 7QY. Tel: (071) 249 0193.

EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

Contracts

Every worker has the benefit of legal rights won through Acts of Parliament & contractual rights written or implied into the contract of employment.

The contract of employment sets out the terms of your job. Often the information is not written down, or not written down in one place, & this leads to uncertainty about what the contract actually is.

You should **insist on receiving written details of the main terms & conditions of work.** The employer is legally obliged to provide these as follows:-

- * Name of employer and employee.
- * The date employment began.
- * Rate of pay & payment interval.
- * Hours of work.
- * Holidays, and holiday pay.
- * Pension & pension schemes, if any.
- * Length of notice.
- * Grievance procedure.
- * Disciplinary procedure; and rules.
- * Job title.

The written statement does not have to include all the relevant details, provided the employer tells you where to find them.

Full time workers can apply to a Tribunal if the employer refuses to provide a **written statement within 13 weeks of the start of work.** This also applies to part time workers. You don't have to sign this written statement, and in general, it's better not to.

Income Tax

Income tax was introduced by William Pitt in 1811 to pay for the Napoleonic Wars. It was to be abolished when the war ended. It was five pence in the £.

Every worker should get a **pay slip** and this should include the amount you have paid in income tax for that week. (or month, if paid monthly.) There should also be a running total of how much you have paid throughout the year.

Income tax (cont)

Hackney Trade Union Support Unit knows of many employers who take income tax from workers wage slips & never pay it to the Inland Revenue. Contact us if you are in that situation.

For most workers the rate of income tax is 25 pence in every £ earned. But this is not 25 pence in every pound as everyone also has an **allowance.** At present these are as follows:-

1. A single person has an allowance of £3.005 per annum. (ie you are allowed to earn £57.77 a week before you pay any income tax) Your tax code number should read 301L on your wage slip.
2. A married woman has the same allowance as above. (Yes, this is sexist!)
3. A married man has an allowance of £4.725 per annum. (ie they are allowed to earn £90.80 pence a week before paying any income tax.) The tax code on the wage slip should read 472H.
4. A single woman with children also has the same tax code as number 3 above.

Calculating the amount you should pay in income tax.

Example one:- Imagine you are a single woman earning £140 a week. Your tax code is 301L. How much income tax should be paid?

No tax is paid on the first £57.77.

Thus the wage on which income tax is paid is:-

£140 minus £57.77 equals £82.23.

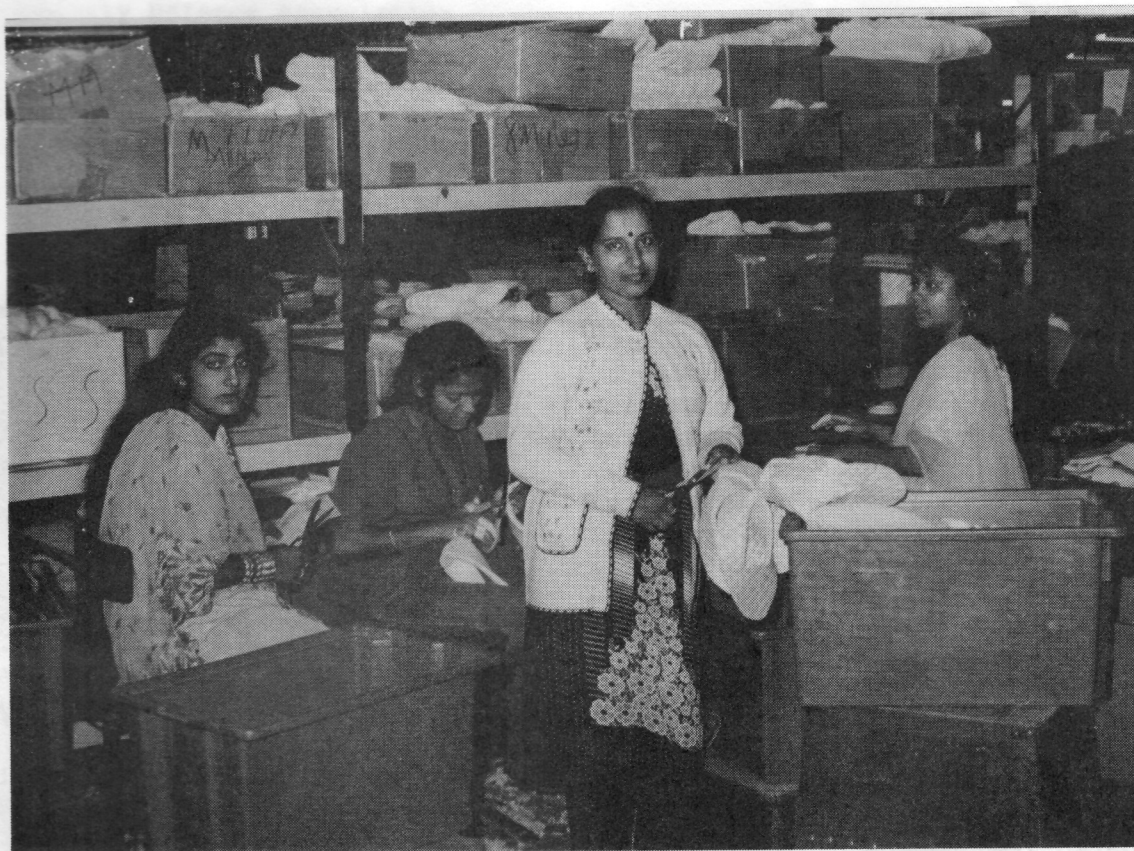
At a rate of 25 pence in the pound then income tax paid equals:-

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{£82.23} \quad \text{times } \frac{25}{100} \\ \hline \end{array}$$

equals £20.55 a week.

Contact Hackney Trade Union Support Unit, Liberty Hall, 489 Kingsland Road, London E8 for details on your working rights, trade unions etc,etc. Telephone:- 071-249-8086.

UNIONISE THE SWEATSHOPS



by Val Veness.

Following on from the successes in Hackney, the campaign to unionise the local garment industry has spread to the neighbouring borough of Islington.

On March 28th a meeting of 40 to 50 people filled the largest committee room in Islington Town Hall to hear local MP Jeremy Corbyn, Dave Waring from TGWU Region 1 & Valerie Veness from the unit speak on the need for a campaign & the pitfalls encountered so far!

Also in attendance & contributing to the campaign were representatives from Islington Trades Council, the Labour Party Black Section & people from the Bangladeshi, Greek Cypriot & Indian community organisations.

Mike Farrell, secretary of the TGWU 1/1312 Hackney Clothing Workers Branch spoke of how the campaign in Hackney had needed the support of the local Turkish & Kurdish groups to get going & how similar links were needed in Islington; taking, of course, into account the different communities.

Tribute was paid by Dave Waring on behalf of the union to the work done by Service Workers Advisory & Action Programme (SWAAP), & also to TUSU for its help and facilities in playing a co-ordinating role.

Richard Kirkwood from Islington Trades Council said that they lacked any similar groupings in his Borough but that the Trades Council was keen to get involved & would pledge any resources it could to support any recruitment drive.

Dina Kleanthous, a local Greek Cypriot activist, welcomed the start of the campaign but pointed out that the problem was not ethnic minority workers but the attitude of elderly, white male union officials who could or would not adapt to the needs of a mainly female & non English speaking workforce. Others made similar points & stressed that the needs of the members must be addressed if the venture is to be successful.

Since the meeting, the local TGWU 1/122 has been asked to be a 'holding branch' until a local Islington clothing workers branch can be established. This is because the Hackney clothing branch felt that they had quite enough to be getting on with.

INTERNATIONAL: PAKISTAN

By Fahim of the Pakistan Workers Association. (PWA)

The military has played the dominant role in the politics of Pakistan since independence in 1947. For example, in 1958 Field Marshall Khan claimed during his successful coup to be "safeguarding the sovereignty & the unity of Pakistan."

The army has never represented the people. Before the partition of India, in 1947, the army was part of the British Empire, trained to protect the interests of imperialism. It was used to suppress the struggles for independence in the Indian sub-continent. Today the army is subservient to the USA and its interests.

In 1971 Z.A Bhutto & his Pakistan Peoples Party were allowed to take power, after the army suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Bengali people in the civil war that was to lead to the creation of Bangladesh.

The defeated army handed over power to the 'civilian rule' of Bhutto. The new leader however used these same military forces to retain control. For example, in 1973, after dismissing the local Assembly of Baluchistan he sent the army against the Baluchi people. Ten thousand people were killed and many more injured.

This reliance by Bhutto led in 1977 to the military taking back what it saw as its rightful throne. He was overthrown in a bloodless coup, imprisoned and later executed in 1979.

General Zia who took over, used brutal suppression & destroyed any forms of democracy. Political parties & trade unions were banned, opponents flogged, tortured, imprisoned & hanged. Women bore the brunt of the oppressive laws.

Meanwhile Afghan rebels were allowed to organise reactionary parties from within Pakistan & their military wings were supported & allowed to operate within and from Pakistan.

Thatcher & Reagan were Zia's biggest fans & the latter backed the regime's massive 'aid' programme with £6 billion. Foreign policy simply reflects the services that the military chiefs provide to the USA.



The USA's continued support for the Afghan Mujahadeen has made itself felt in Pakistan where there are masses of weapons, a huge trade in heroin and cities ravaged by bomb blasts.

Despite using the term 'Islam' Zia never gained any legitimacy in the peoples eyes. The masses did not waver in their struggle against oppression & although thousands gave their lives their struggle could not be crushed.

When General Zia & the top military brass were blown up in a plane explosion in 1988, the military reluctantly allowed free party based elections to take place on November 1988. These were only the second such elections since 1947.

Such elections were only a small step towards achieving the peoples democratic aspirations as the only real changes were at the top. Today more & more people in Pakistan are realising that no genuine, lasting democracy can succeed as long as the military remains. It can't be reformed or its wings clipped.

The sham democracy, with Benazir Bhutto at its head, which has been permitted is likely to be another lull before the storm. The military will at some point, seek to recapture its unbridled power of the past. The PWA will continue to offer whatever support we can to the people of Pakistan.

PWA(Britain), PO Box 330, London N1 2YY.